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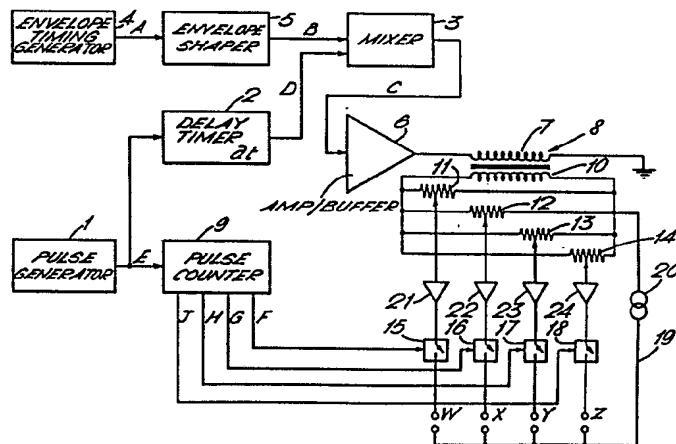
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㉙ Muscle stimulating apparatus.

㉚ Multiple output muscle stimulating apparatus includes a source (1) of electrical signals which are sequentially applied by a time division multiplexer (9, 15-18) to multiple electrode pairs (W-Z) adapted to be connected adjacent to the skin of a patient to stimulate the underlying muscles. The multiplexer

prevents more than one electrode pair from being energized by the stimulating signals at any given time. A common return path (19) for the signals applied to each of the electrode pairs is provided with a current limiting device (20) for enhancement of safety.



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DESCRIPTION

"MUSCLE STIMULATING APPARATUS"

The present invention relates to a muscle stimulating apparatus.

Muscle stimulating apparatuses are well-known which comprise a plurality of electrodes which are applied 5 to the skin and a pulse source which supplies to them a stream of pulses of suitable frequency, amplitude and waveform to stimulate muscles below the skin for the purposes of toning or exercising them. One such apparatus is the Slendertone (Registered Trade Mark).

According to the present invention we provide 10 a muscle stimulating apparatus comprising: a source of electrical signals; a plurality of electrodes adapted to be applied adjacent respective locations on the skin of a person to stimulate underlying muscles; and means for 15 energizing said electrodes in response to said electrical signals, the arrangement being such that the signals are applied across the electrodes a pair at a time in a predetermined time sequence. By applying the signals, which are preferably pulses, to the electrodes a pair 20 at a time, so that the signals do not overlap in time, the interaction between the signals to multiple electrodes, which has been a disadvantage of prior apparatuses, is avoided. A convenient way of producing suitable trains 25 of pulses is by time division multiplexing of a single pulse train.

One suitable form of the trains of pulses consists of bursts of pulses followed by spaces of 30 lengths approximately equal to the bursts. Preferably the leading edge of the envelope of each burst is rounded so that the burst "surges" to its maximum value.

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One way of producing such a waveform with the present apparatus is to have a pulse generator which generates the pulses at a desired frequency (e.g. 100 Mn) and to amplitude modulate it with the output of a much lower

5 frequency square waveform from an envelope timing generator and having a suitably rounded leading edge. The resulting modulated pulse train is applied via an amplifier/buffer to the primary of an output transformer. The output of the higher frequency pulse

10 generator is also connected to a pulse counter and "One of N" decoder, where N is the desired number of outputs of the apparatus. Associated with the secondary of the output transformer is multiplexing circuitry suitable for deriving N separate pulse streams, one for each

15 set of electrodes. These pulse streams are derived using N electronic switches, preferably opto-isolators, each controlled by individual signals of the outputs of the "One of N" decoder and are delivered to respective output terminals for connection to the body electrodes.

20 In the circuitry associated with the transformer secondary, each set of electrodes may share a common return line and this can include a current limiting device such as a controlled current source to ensure that the maximum current is limited to a desirable and

25 safe level.

An apparatus as described above is described in more detail below with reference to the accompanying drawings. The illustrated apparatus has a number of advantages. Because of the time division multiplex

30 method of production of the pulse streams and the inclusion of the current limiting device, the pulses applied to each set of electrodes have a known and limited maximum energy content. The apparatus is

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incapable of providing peak voltages and currents beyond those supplied by the transformer and current limiting device, regardless of any accidental or deliberate cross connecting of any output electrode groups. Electrical
5 interaction between electrodes of different sets when placed on the skin for the purpose of stimulation cannot occur because the pulse signals to each arrive at the electrodes at different times, therefore the effects of having signals present on all outputs simultaneously,
10 which as mentioned above has caused interaction problems in the past, is eliminated.

The above and other features of the invention will be further described by way of non-limiting example with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:-

15 FIGURE 1 is a functional block diagram of one embodiment of the invention;

FIGURE 2 shows the waveforms occurring at various points in the circuitry of Figure 1; and

20 FIGURE 3 shows one particular form of the circuitry of Figure 1.

The general construction and operation of the illustrated apparatus should be readily apparent from Figures 1 and 2.

Briefly, the apparatus comprises a pulse
25 generator 1 whose output is delivered by a delay circuit which provides a short delay to equalise delay times throughout the circuitry to a mixer 3 where the pulse stream D is amplitude modulated with a much lower frequency pulse waveform B. This waveform B has an
30 approximately 50 percent duty cycle and rounded positive-going edges and is derived from a lower frequency pulse generator 4 by an envelope shaper 5. The output from mixer 3 is applied to the input of an amplifier and

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buffer 6 which drives the primary 7 of an output transformer 8.

The output of pulse generator 1 is also applied to the input of a pulse counter 9 whose outputs F to J 5 each go high in succession to produce 4 streams of pulses as indicated at F to J in Figure 2 which go high in non-overlapping relation to one another and in synchronism with respective ones of 4 successive pulses of the pulse train E. The pulse counter may, for 10 example, comprise a 4-bit recycling counter whose outputs are connected to a "One-of-4" decoder.

Connected in parallel across the secondary 10 of transformer 8 are four potentiometers 11 to 14 associated with respective output terminals W-Z to 15 which, in use, may be connected one electrode of each of 4 sets of electrodes which may be applied to the body of the user using suitable body pads. The wipers of the potentiometers 11 to 14 are connected to the associated terminals W-Z via respective electronically 20 operated switches 15 to 18 which are controlled by the individual ones of the outputs F to J of pulse counter 9. These electronic switches may be of the opto-isolator type e.g. having a light emitting diode driven by the associated output of pulse counter 9 and a photo- 25 transistor constituting the controlled - conduction path. This, of course, serves to ensure that the circuitry connected to the body electrodes "floats" for isolation purposes.

The outputs W-Z may share a common return line 30 19 to the secondary 10 of the transformer and this may include a current limiting device 20 such as a constant current source to keep the pulsed currents at a desired value.

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In Figure 1 each potentiometer 11-14 is shown connected to its associated output W-Z via an amplifier 21-24 and switch 15-18. This arrangement of the amplifiers and switches is intended to be

5 schematic in the corresponding part of Figure 3; the controlled element of each opto-isolator is a photo transistor 15-18 which when turned on shunts the collector to emitter circuit of an associated transistor 21-24 which corresponds to the amplifier in Figure 2.

10 These transistors 21-24 are suitably rated to handle the output voltage from transformer 8.

Figure 3 shows one possible implementation of the circuitry of Figure 1 using "556" timers, CD4000 series logic circuitry and opto-isolators.

15 By way of example, suitable signal characteristics are as follows:-

Pulse duration (as in D.E.W,X,Y,Z) from 20 to 200 microseconds;

20 Pulse interval (as in W,X,Y,Z) 12 milliseconds;
Pulse interval (as in E,D) 3 milliseconds for 4 output circuit version of the stimulating device or
Pulse interval (as E,D) 1.5 milliseconds for 8 output circuit version of the stimulating device.

25 Delay time (E&D) 200 microseconds;
Pulse train duration (as in A,B,C) 1 second;
Pulse train interval (as in A,B,C) 1.5 second;
Maximum output voltage 110V into 1 kilohm load;
Maximum output current 120 milliamps.

30 Other values for the above parameters are, of course, possible: although in the illustrated embodiment the pulses applied to the body electrodes are unipolar, the circuitry could be so arranged that the pulses are bipolar.

C L A I M S

1. Muscle stimulating apparatus comprising: a source of electrical signals; a plurality of electrodes adapted to be applied adjacent respective locations on the skin of a person to stimulate underlying muscles; and means for energizing said electrodes in response to said electrical signals, the arrangement being such that the signals are applied across the electrodes a pair at a time in a predetermined time sequence.

2. Apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said energizing means comprises a time division multiplexer having an input operatively connected to said source of electrical signals, and a plurality of outputs respectively operatively connected to said electrodes for sequentially energizing said electrodes one pair at a time.

3. Apparatus according to claim 2 wherein said multiplexer comprises a plurality of switches or corresponding circuits in one-to-one relation with said outputs, and means for sequentially actuating said switches or circuits in response to the occurrence of said electrical signals thereby causing said electrical signals to energize each electrode pair as the switch corresponding to its respective multiplexer output is actuated.

4. Apparatus according to claim 3 wherein each of said switches comprises a light sensitive switching element connected in circuit between said source of electrical signals and a respective one of said electrode pairs, and a light source which is operatively connected to said source of electrical signals and energized in response to said electrical signals.

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5. Apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the electrodes are arranged in pairs, there being a "line" electrode and a "return" electrode in each pair and the return electrodes of the pair being electrically connected together.

6. Apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims and including current limiting means for limiting the current flowing through the user's body to below a predetermined magnitude.

7. Apparatus according to claims 5 and 6 wherein there is a common return circuit path connected between said source of electrical signals and the return electrodes and the current limiting means is connected in said common return circuit path for maintaining the current between the electrodes of each of said electrode pairs below a predetermined magnitude.

8. Apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims wherein said source of electrical signals comprises a pulse generator, and said energizing means comprises a pulse counter having an input connected to said pulse generator and a plurality of outputs, and a plurality of switches each of which is operatively connected between a respective one of the outputs of said pulse counter and one of said electrode pairs, each of said switches being actuated in response to the signal at its respective pulse counter output.

9. Muscle stimulating apparatus constructed and arranged to operate substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to and as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

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Fig. 1.

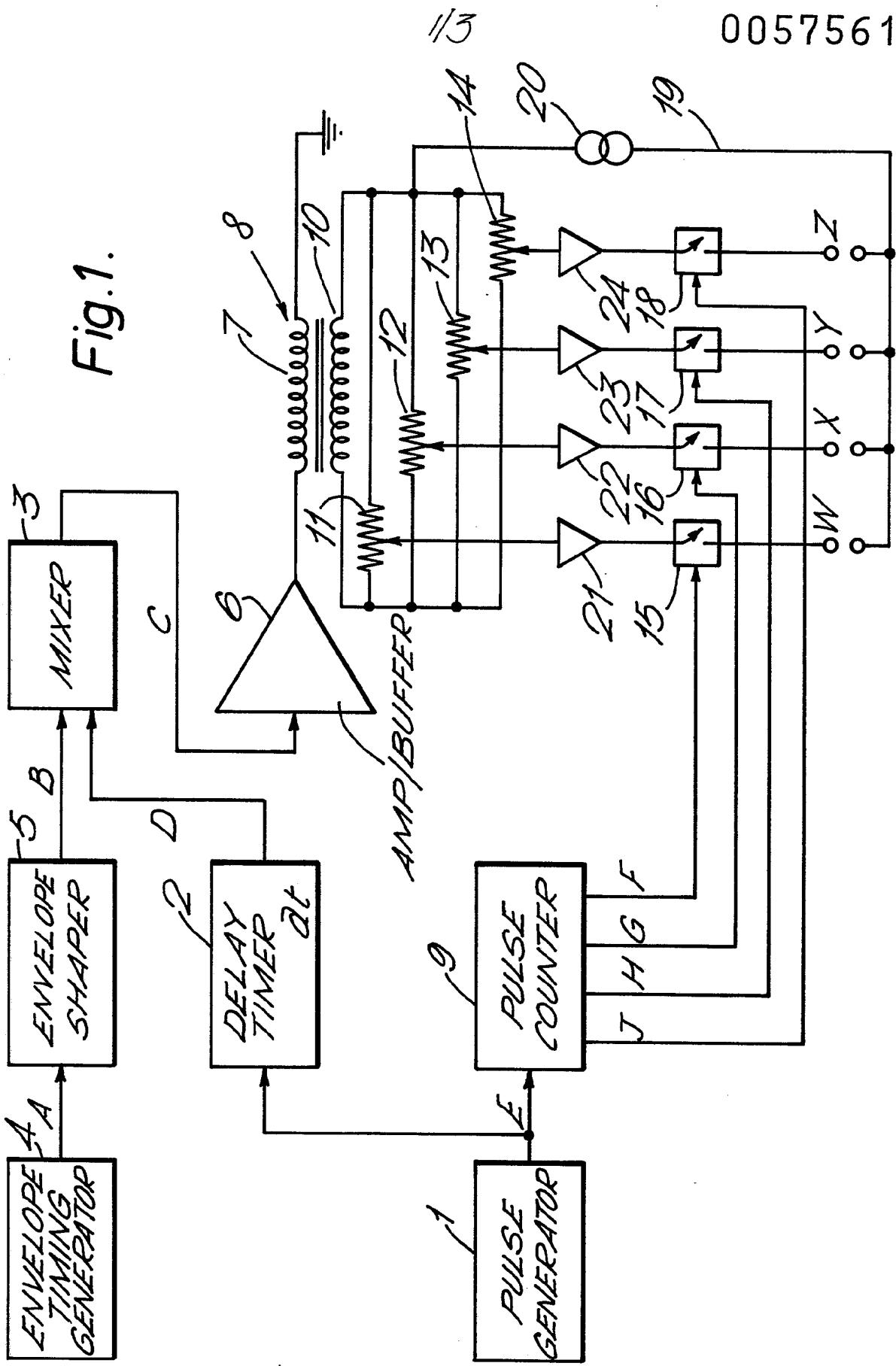
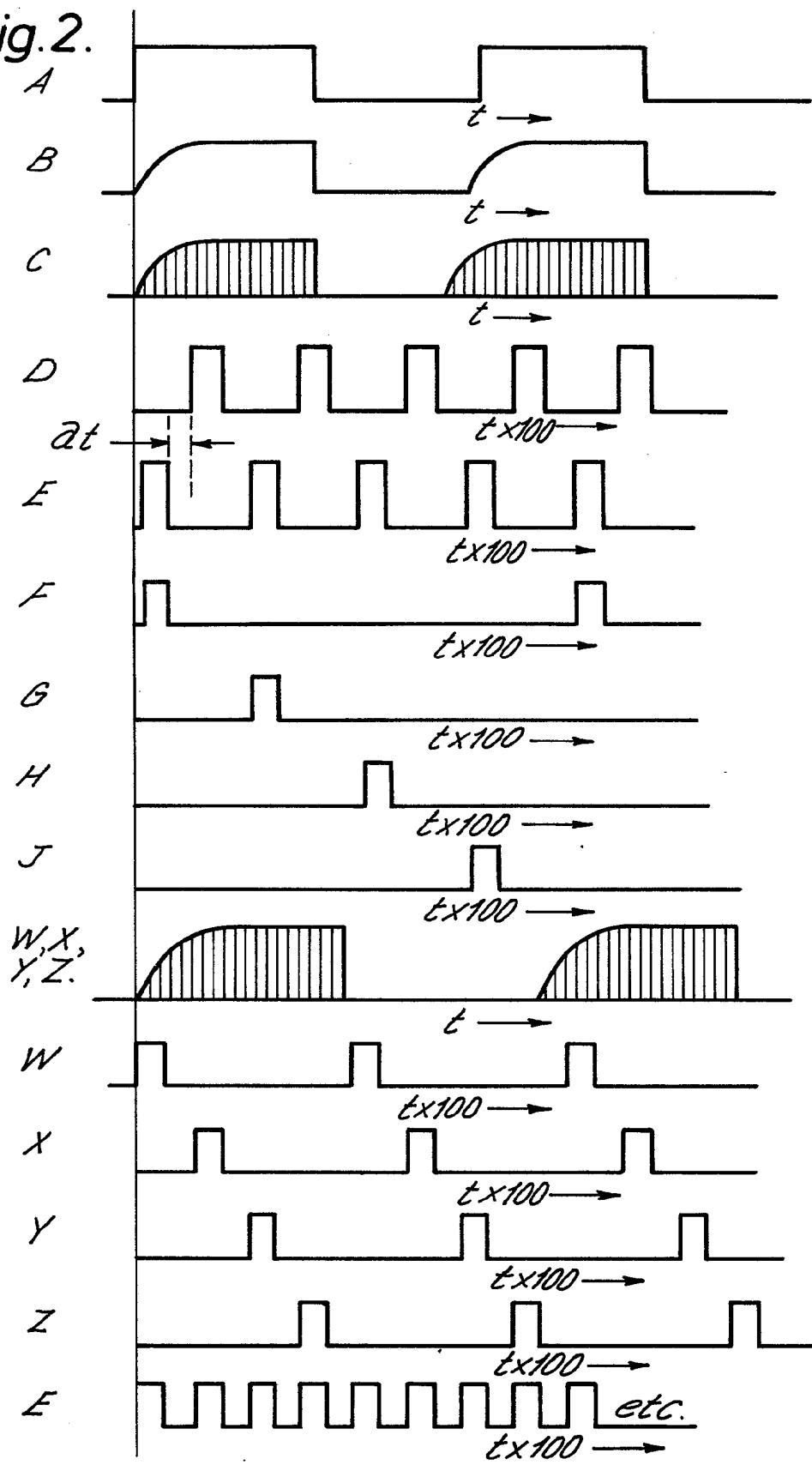


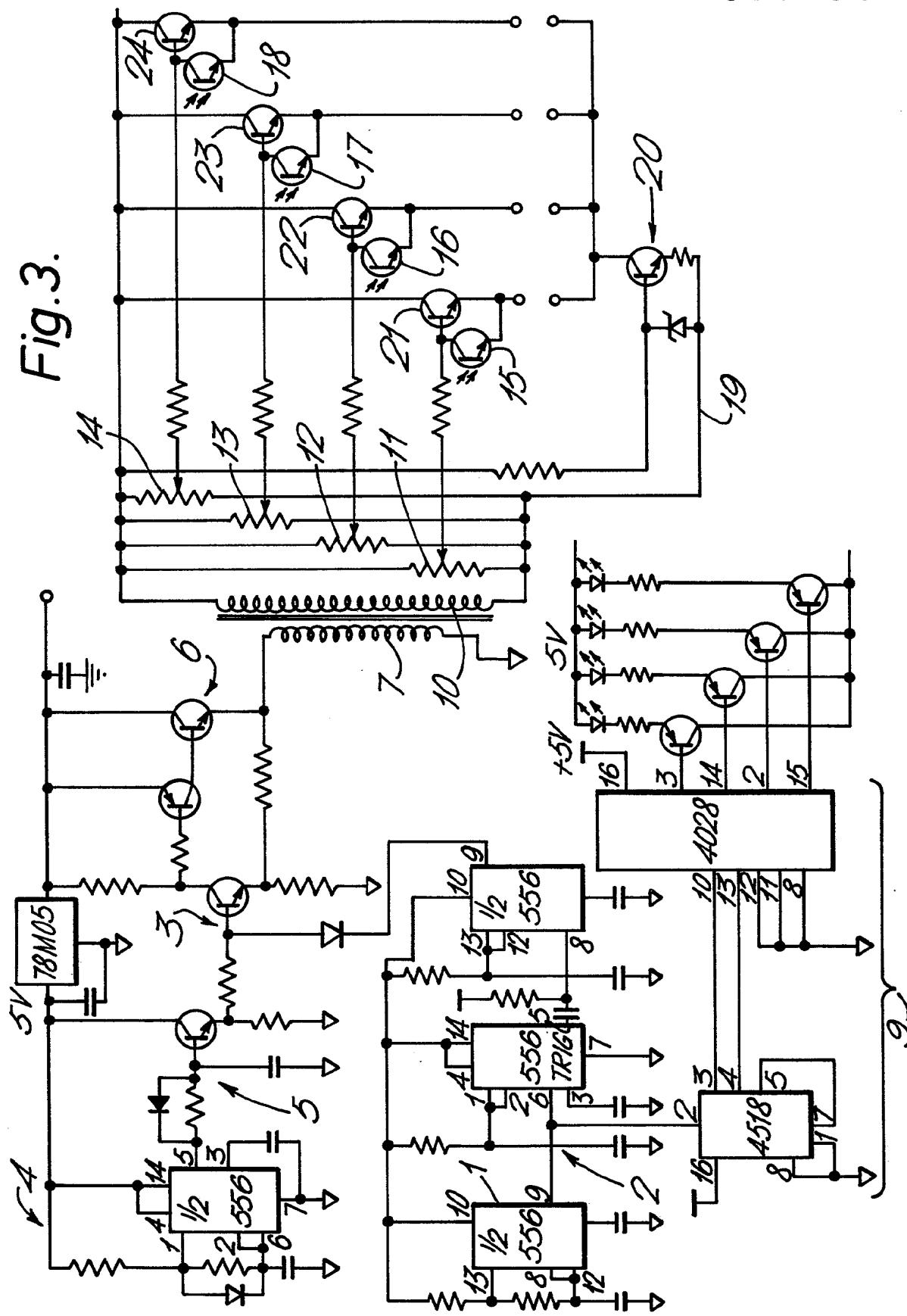
Fig. 2.



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Fig.3.





DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. 3)
X	MEDICAL & BIOLOGICAL ENGINEERING AND COMPUTING, vol. 17, no. 3, May 1979, pages 421-424, Stevenage (GB); J.S.PETROFSKY: "Digital-analogue hybrid 3-channel sequential stimulator". *Page 422, last paragraph and figure 2; page 421, figure 1*	1-3,5, 9	A 61 N 1/36
X	---	1-4,8, 9	
X	US-A-3 851 651 (ICENBICE) *Column 4, line 26 to column 5, line 2; column 5, line 8*	1-3,8, 9	
X	---	1-3,8, 9	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl. 3)
X	DE-A-2 437 346 (THOMA) *Page 3, line 5 to page 4, line 13; page 5, paragraph 2, page 6, paragraph 1*	1,6,7	A 61 N
X	---	1,6,7	
A	FR-A-2 433 950 (ICET) *Page 3, line 21-23 and 31-34; page 4, lines 6-9*	4	
A	---	5-7	
A	US-A-4 177 819 (KOFSKY) *Column 3, lines 51-61*	4	
A	---	5-7	
	EP-A-0 000 477 (JANKELSON) *Page 3, line 31 to page 4, line 1; page 9, lines 15-34; page 11, lines 3-12; figure 3*		

The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search	Date of completion of the search	Examiner	
THE HAGUE	04-05-1982	SIMON J.J.E.	
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS			
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